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The Temples of Banaras

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THE TEMPLES OF BANARAS

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Varanasi, the holiest city of the Hindus, situated on the left bank of the river Ganga, lies between two tributaries of it, Varuna and Assi. It is because of these two rivers the city is said to have derived its name Varanasi, which later changed to Banaras. The sanctity of the city is not only due to its being situated on the holy Ganga, usually a south-easterly river, which has become here more holy because of its flowing northwards pointing towards Himalayas, the abode of the gods, but also because of the two confluences of the rivers Varuna and Assi. The river confluence is regarded by the Hindus as a sacred bathing place. Besides this, one lesser important stream, Godowlia *nālā* also used to join Ganga at Daśāśwamedha ghāt, now dried up and having the city populated over its bed. About over three miles long river bank between the confluences of river Assi in the south and Varuna in the north is full of ghats, more than 85 in number, a majority of them being *pakkā*. These ghats, facing east, give more religious importance to the place because of the added facility for the worship of Sun god early in the morning.

Beside these ghats the city is religiously important because of its temples, which can literally be said to be innumerable because, apart from public temples almost every old Hindu house has a temple of its own ; sometimes even more than one.

It is popularly believed that the city of Varanasi is not situated on the earth but it stands on the trident (*triśūla*) of the god Śiva and that is why it is unique in the three worlds. It is not easy to subscribe to the validity of the legend but however, three prongs of Śiva's trident are traceable geographically on the river bank. The whole city of Banaras is situated on three kankar (lime concretion) ridges, 50′ to 30′ high, forming the west bank of Ganga. The northern most, the Raj Ghat plateau is the highest one and lies between the Varuna sangam and the Raj Ghat. The middle one, the longest among the three, can be called Daśāśavamedha plateau marked by the Godowalia *nālā*, confluencing at the Daśāśvamedha Ghāt. The third one may be termed as Assi, lowering at the confluence of that river.

It is, however, doubtful that Banaras had the same look and religious significance from the very beginning. There are reasons to believe that the

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ancient Varanasi was situated not only at the Rajghat mound protected by the rivers Ganga and Varuna but its eastward extension on the other side of the latter is also evident by the extensive habitational remains covering a very vast area. This has been confirmed by the archaeological excavations on the other side of Varuna by Prof. Narain. This goes to support the supposition of late Prof. V. S. Agrawala[1] that the derivation of the name of the city from Varuna and Assi is a later imagination and originally Varāna itself was Varāṇasi, a river name found in the *Bhīṣma Parvan* (10.30) of the *Mahābhārata*. Furthr he observes that according to the *sūtra* वरणादिभ्यश्च (4-2-82) of Pāṇini, 'a city full of Varaṇa trees is also called Varaṇā (वरणानामदूरभवं नगरं वरणाः।). Now there is no sense in discussing whether this river Varunā was named after the trees called Varaṇā referred to in Pāṇini and also whether this tree could grow in Gangatic plains, also which were to be found in the Swat Valley ; or whether this river was so named after the river Varaṇāvatī referred to in the *Atharva Veda* (5/7/1) the identity of which is doubtful. The antiquity of the name Vārāṇasī also becomes a matter of doubt when we consider the facts that Kāśi is referred to as a village in Buddhist literature[2] and that in vedic literature name Kāśī is referred to and not Vārāṇasī.[3]

The establishment and prosparity of ancient Kāśī or Vārāṇasī was most probably inspired and consolidated by its potentialities as a prospering trade centre. The high plateau on both sides of Varuṇā at the confluencing point with Ganga gave protection and security to the trading people from frequent floods and foreign invasions. The rivers served as great trade routes. Trade was followed by religion.

Banaras as a religious centre became famous only through the Purāṇas. It is surprising to note that Manu does not recognise Vārāṇasī as a religious centre.[4] Vedic literature also has not very friendly attitude towards it. There is also a tendency among the scholars to represent Mahādeva or Maheśvara, i.e., Śiva as a non-Aryan deiety. Prof. Altekar[5] gives a vivid account

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[1] भूमिका, p. 6 by V. S. Agrawala in Motichandra's काशी का इतिहास 1962.
[2] Ibid.
[3] *Atharvaveda*, V. 22.14 ; and also Motichandra, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 20-21. Cf. also Altekar, A. S., *History of Banaras*, Journal of Banaras Hindu University, Vol I, 1937 pp 58-59
[4] Altekar, A. S.. *Op. Cit.*, p. 48
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

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of the aryanization of this god and thereby also of a great number of folk gods like *yakṣas* etc. A survey of Banaras and its *pañcakrośī* area will reveal numerous folk deities still being worshipped, very often in the guise of Brahmanical gods, in some form or the other.

As regards the temple architecture of Banaras any observer will be shocked to note that at present there exists no temple which can be dated before the seventeenth century A.D.,[1] except one at Kandawā, a few miles southwest of Banaras, which miraculously escaped destruction and can be dated in eleventh-twelfth century.[2] Banaras and Mathura are the two main cities which suffered most simply because of their geographical positions in upper India ; a boon proved to be a curse during mediaeval period. But for these Mohemmedan inroads Banaras and Mathura would have been another Khajuraho or Bhubanseśwara ; and who knows even something more than that ?

Long before the beginning of the Christian era Śiva must have been worshipped in his symbolic form in the open as in modern times we see many Bira or Yakṣa *chauras* in the vicinity of Banaras.

Modern authorities on ancietnt temple architecture are not in favour of dating any Hindu temple before the time of the Guptas though we have literary references about the temples of Rāma (i.e. Balrāma) and Keśava in second century B.C. Some Gupta inscriptions also give vivid description of high towered temples. Dr. K. K. Sinha recently excavated remains of a Gupta temple at the site of Bhitari which is *triratha* in plan and must have had a *śikhara* or tower. Mr. Krishna Deva also uncovered a temple at Rājhghāt in 1940 which he dates in the first to third century, A.D.[3] But we are not sure whether these temples were dedicated to Śiva or Viṣṇu or some other god. The Bhitari pillar inscription of Skandagupta[4] says that he established an image of Viṣṇu at that place. Dr. Moti Chandra[5] informs about a Gupta seal having a representation of a Viṣṇu temple of Banaras. Though we do not find archaeological evidence or inscriptional references about Śaivism in Banaras in pre-Gupta period we are on surer grounds about the spread and popularity of this cult in India as early as 1st cent. A.D. as is evident from the coins of Kadphises group of kings bearing the epithet of

[1] *Ibid.* p. 251 ff.
[2] *Bharati.* No. 6 Part I (1962-63) p. 148 ff.
[3] Motichandra. *Op. Cit*, pp. 77-78.
[4] Flect., *CII*, Vol III pp. 52-54.
[5] Motichandra *Op. Cit.*, p 99.

māheswara.[1] A Vākāṭaka[2] inscription also gives reference to the dynasty of Bhāraśivas who performed ten horse sacrifices and bathed in the holy river Ganga and were devotees of Siva. Dr. K. P. Jayaswal is of the opinion that the place where this act was done is in Banasas and is now known as Daśāśwamedha Ghāt. Thus the association of Banasas with Śiva worship is quite ancient.

It seems that in earlier times Śiva worship was in the form of a folk cult among the people ; and most probably Banaras was its strongest centre. Its form also was not as we see it today. Pehaps these folk gods had equal status in the beginning and in due course of time one started gainig preference over others in the minds of the people. Mythologies and stories of miracles evolved and in this process one folk-god placed supreme and others became his subordinates. As in administration, this supreme-god, Viśveśvara was supposed to have appointed some as *kṣetrapālas* and some as commanders etc. Modern Yakṣas, Brahmas, Vīras, Vināyakas and Gaṇeśas in and around Banaras are none but ancient folk gods, who, in the course of time became under one God of Gods. The symbol for many of these folk-gods, who could not be iconified because of their lesser importance, is conical in form, some times having one or more nitches. This, resembles with the cylindrical form of the liṅgam, symbol of the god Śiva. A liṅgam, in its simplest form, never requires any artistic skill to carve. This simplicity indicates towards its folk origin. However, the iconograhic representation of Maheśvara, having a trident and standing beside a bull, is as old as the beginning of the first century A.D..[3] The statement of the Purāṇas that Śiva never leaves Banaras, and hence its another name *avimukta kṣetra*, also testifies that Vārāṇasī was the original abode of this god since very beginning and continues uptil now.

Perhaps it was during the Gupta period that we find, Śiva worship in Vārānasī well established ; not under the name of Viśvanātha or Viśveśvara but *Avimukteśwara*. In *Matsya Purāṇa*, ascribed to the Gupta period, eight famous Siva-lingas are enumerated which are as follows : 1. Hariśchandra, (2) Āmrālakeśwara, (3) Jaleśwara, (4) Śrī Parvata, (5) Mahālaya, (6) Kṛimichaṇḍeśwara, (7) Kedāreśwara, and (8) Avimukte'śwara. Among these the last was considered to be most important. Several seals from

[1] Brown, C. J., *The Coins of India*. 1973 Pl. IV. 3.
[2] Fleet, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 245-46.
[3] Brown, C. J., *Op., Cit.*

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Rajghat having Avimukteśwara inscriptions, ascribed to the Gupta and post-Gupta period up to 8-9th centuries A.D. on palaeographic grounds, are clear evidence that Avimukteśwara was the patron deity of Banaras at least upto 9th century A.D.[1] Avimukteśwara was, probebly, also known by the name Devadeva as in *Matsyapurāṇa* (184/9) it is said that the temple of Devadeva Avimukta was considered to be the holiest.[2] Dr. Moti Chandra also refers to a seal from Rajghat having inscription Śri Devadevaswāmin.

We have no information about the situation of this temple of Avimukteśwara in Banaras. In the *Liṅgapurāṇa*, quoted by Lakṣmīdhar, the temple of Avimukteśwara is said to be situated in the north-eastern part of the city In the south of which there was a Mahādeva well.[3] To the west of this well was a temple of Vārānasī Devī. This cannot be the site of the Viswanath temple built by Todarmall during the reign of Akbar and, on which now stands the masque of Aurangzeb. This temple of Avimukteśwara must have been originally situated on the mound of Rajghat or in the Biśweśarganj area. In the above mentioned *Liṅgapurāṇa* hundreds of *liṅgas* and their situations are described. Among them there is a story about a linga called Devadeva. Once the demons have stolen this *liṅga* and were carrying it. But, however, they had to leave the *linga* and fled away. Thus it was called Avimukta and to the south of its temple there was a well.[4] This is a confusing story which describes the same name and same situation of the well in two temples. It appears that these two stories point to two different stages of Siva worship in Banaras. In the first stage, when the deity was known as Avimukteśwara only, this temple was situated in the north-eastern part of the city. But somehow in the second stage, after some disturbances and religious upheaval, the site of the temple was changed to the place where the demons dropped the lingam under the spell of some miracle. A well to the south of the temple was perhaps also excavated to recall its old situation. It is also interesting to note here that a small shrine of Avimukteśwar, once the patron deitiey of Banaras, is situated at north-western corner of the present Aurangzeb mosque built on the old Viśweśwara temple. Though Śiva was the main deity of Banaras since long it seems likely that same temple never occupied supreme position among the Śiva temples throughout. During Muslim rule this shifting of the importance

[1] Motichandra, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 95-96.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 94.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 173.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

must have been more frequent due to repeated desecration by the Muslims on one hand and also due to the rigid orthodoxity of the Brahmans on the other.

As pointed out above we have no information about any Gupta temple in Vārānasī. However, we know from an inscription on a seal that the Mula-gandhakuṭī was there at Sarnath in the Gupta period.[1] Huien Tsang mentions about one hundred temples of Banaras about 20 of which were situated in the city proper. He also mentions about a hundred feet high stuate of the principal deity of Banaras. His commentator Fan-Chi opines that it was a hundred feet high Śiva-liṅga.[2] However, it is not mentioned whether this huge deity was placed in some temple or was placed in the open. In our opinion Heien Tsang might have meant a hundred feet high well decorated temple with its high tower.

In a Pāla inscription on the pedastal of an image it is mentioned that the king of Gauḍa caused to be made hundreds of temples of Īśāna (Śiva) and Chitra-Ghaṇṭā (Durga) in Kāśī.[3] This inscription is dated in 1026 A.D. The Jabalpur inscription of the Kalachuri king Karṇadeva, dated in 1065 A.D. also states that the king built a temple called Karṇameru in Vārānasī.[4] This Karṇameru temple is also referred to in a book of Gahadawala period.[5] The Gahadawala kings also must have constructed numerous temples in Vārānasī which was their capital. And thus there seems not much exageration in the claims of the Muslim historians that Kutubuddin Aibak razed a thousand temples of Banaras at the end of the twelfth century. This fate of Banaras temples must have become a regular feature during following centuries but the Hindus also continued their religious practices according to exegencies of the situations and built and re-built their temples with proverbial persistency. An inscription in the north-western cloister of the Lal Darwaza masjid at Jaunpur shows that in 1296 A.D. a temple of Padmeśwara was built near the Viśwānath temple of Banaras. It indicates that the construction of this mosque at Jaunpur in 1447 must have been done by demolishing and spoiling the temple of Padmeśwara at Banaras most probely by the rulers of Sharqui dynasty of Jaunpur. The same fate must have been shared by the neighbouring temple of Viśwanāth. In

[1] Dharma Rakshita, *Sarnath Ka Itihasa* p. 150.
[2] Motichand a, *Op. Cit*, p. 103.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 110-111, and also *A.S.R.*, 1903-04, p. 221 ff.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. III
[5] *Ibid.* p. 162.

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1494 Banaras temples once more suffered distruction at the hands of Sikandar Lodi when he conquered the city. In the Adampura ward there are still existing many old mosques like the Bakaria Kund and Aḍhāī Kangra, which have been built out of materials of old Hindu temples. These were razed to the ground very probably by some of the predecessors of Aurangzeb.[1]

This state of affairs prepared the Hindus to rise to the occasion and modify the mode of their worship according to the demand of situations. Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa, who is being given credit to rebuild the temple of Viśwanath, only to be demolished by Aurangzeb, writes in the sixteenth century about the worship of Śiva. He writes though there the *linga* of Viśweśwara is some times placed here and some times there by men due to the exigencies of the time the worship should be done at these places. It may also happen that due to the intolarant rule of the Muslims there may be no *linga* whatsoever at the place; one should in that case offer his salutations and circumambulation etc. to its site. That will be sufficient for the completion of the pilgrimage. Other worshipping performances like *abhiṣeka* etc. decidedly should not be done. This points towards two main things. Firstly, the *lingam* of the deity was frequently being removed by the priests at the slightest indication of a disturbance. Secondly, they have evolved some emergency methods of worship even in the absense of the symbol of the deity; for thousands of pilgrims continued to visit Banaras during these centuries. Under these circumstances and also in the absense of any definite indication we cannot be sure whether the temple built by Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa was at the original site of Viśveswara temple or not. Had this been erected at the original place of Viśveśwara temple, earlier demolished by the Muslim invaders several times, how it escaped the fate of being converted into a mosque, is by no means certain. Even most tolerant muslim ruler like Akbar himself could not permit a temple to be constructed at the ruins of a mosque. Under the circumstance we can not share with the opinion of Prof. Altekar[2] that Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa's Viśweśwara temple was built on the old site. In fact it occupied a new place and its plan and architecture also point towards its mediaeval affiliation. We are not able to understand Altaker's argument that "though the temple of Viśvanāth was demolished more than once before the time of Aurangzeb the Muslims had refraimed from further insulting the Hindu feeling by erecting a masque

[1] Altekar A. S., *Op. Cit.*, pp. 246.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 256 ff.

upon its place. Aurangzeb took this step in order to render even the site of the old temple inaccessible to Hindus and prevent them from worshipping it."[1] What a respect for Hindu feelings? To demolish Hindu temples and to insult their gods but to refrain from further insulting by not erecting a mosque upon its place? And on what evidence this can be said when we get explicit references of Hindu temples of Banaras being demolished and mosques being erected upon them? We have no reasons to believe that the holiest among them was not converted into a mosque while lesser important ones were sharing the same fate. Once this was done it was almost impossible to get a temple erected on the site. Under the rigours of these and similar arguments one is bound to believe that the sixteenth century Viśveśwara temple of Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa occupied a new site or a ruined site of some lesser important temple which escaped conversion simply because of its unassuming importance. Once the site was selected and the temple erected, it was made complete with all the accessories which the tradition knew about the old principal temple centuries back, including the well to its south.

The old temple of Viśvanātha, which is now the mosque of Aurangzeb, was built by the efforts of Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa (1514 to 1595) with the financial help of Raja Todar Mall in about 1585 A.D. This was permitted by Akbar partly as an evidence of his tolerant policy and partly to please his Hindu generals Raja Man Singh and Raja Todar Mall who proved to be more faithful to the emperor than his Muslim ones. On the basis of the plan of this temple prepared by James Prinsep in 1827 and the description given by Prof. Altekar it is possible to restore a sufficiently satisfactory view of it.

This square temple of Viśvanātha was a *navaratan* type, i.e. nine spires altogether including the middle one which was the highest. The other eight *śikharas* being four on corner shrines and four on *maṇḍapas*. The walls were about 32′ high including cornice and the main tower 128′ high. The corner spires were about 48′ high and those over the *maṇḍapas* were 64′. All these *śikharas* must have had a number of *aṅgaśikharas* complete with *rāmrekhā, āmra, morā, galā, kalaṅgī*, a number of jars i.e. *gagarī* and above all, a trident.

The ground plan of this temple was also a finest elaboration of a typical *Banārasī* temple. Its central sanctuary i.e., *garbhagṛiha* was 32′

[1] *Ibid.* p. 258.

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square with an antechamber or *antarāla* 16′ × 10′ on all the four sides. Beyond these there was an additional *antarāla* 12′ × 8′ on all the sides leading into the *maṇḍapas* which were 16′ square. All the four corners were occupied by four small shrines each 12′ square dedicated to four gods: Tārakeśwara occuping S-Eastern corner, *Daṇḍapāṇi* S-Western *Gaṇeśa* N-Westesn and *Bhairava* North-Eastern. The four *maṇḍapas* also had definite names: *Jñāna, Mukti, Śṛiṅgāra* and *Aiśvarya maṇḍapas* respectively occupying eastern, southern, western, & northern sides. These corner shrines had two openings with chambers to their front which formed the path of the circumambulation to the main sanctuary. To the east of this temple a large *maṇḍapa* of about 125′ long and 35′ wide was also provided for the assembly of the devotees **(Plate, V)**.

This was the typical elaborated form of a *Banārasī* temple with difference from temples at Khajuraho or Bhubaneśvara. While these early mediaeval temples had their *maṇḍapas* successively arranged infront of the main-sanctuary a *Banārasī* temple had its *maṇḍapas* on the four cardinal directions thus giving it a square and more compact shape rather than an elongated appearance. This individuality of *Banārasī* temples more or less is still maintained not only in ground plan but also in elevation.

Here we can consider the place of a Banaras temple among the temples of northern India. The tradition recognises three styles of temple architure, i.e. Nāgara, Vesara and Dravida. It seems that these were geographical divisions. It is generally assumed that term Nāgara roughly covers whole of northern India covering Orissa, M.P., Rajasthan and Gujarata also. But there are certain texts which enumerate four styles; e.g. *Aparājitapṛcchā*[1] mentions *Nāgarī, Drāvidī, Lāṭī and Vārāṭī* and, omits *Vesara*. Similarly an incription from Holal[2] mentions Nāgara, Dravida, Vesara and Kāliṅga styles. Thus we have at least six styles viz. *Drāviḍa, Vesara, Kāliṅga, Nāgara, Vārāṭī* and *Lāṭi*. If we keep in mind that these styles were regional manifestations of the temple styles we can mark with some precision the location of these styles, *Dravida* is clearly for south and Vesara covers the Deccan region of Kannada and Telugu speaking area. One can very well locate *Lāṭī* in *Lāṭa* or Gujarata state, *Vārāṭi* in *Vairāṭa* or roughly in Rajasthan state & *Kālingī* in Kalinga or Orissa. Now M.P., U.P. and Bihar area is left out for Nagara style of temples.

[1] *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 694 f.n. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*

Though modern scholars treat all northern Indian sub-styles under the broad name of Nāgara and there are some common features which can be marked underlying all these substyles, one can not fail to recongnise their regional individuality and thus justify their calling by sub-regional names. In its limited sense the *Nāgara* style has to be confined in the U.P. and Bihar area. The M.P. temples of Khajuraho form a style of their own but in that area we do get temples which are in true Nāgara style in its limited sense. About the origin of the word *Nāgarī* Professor V. S. Agrawala[1] observes that "In the newly discovered drama named *Pādatāḍitakam*, it is stated that Pāṭaliputra became famous as Nagara, that is, the Metropolitan city..... Any mode or style connected with that city of the North was known as Nāgara or Nāgarī, e.g., the Nāgara style of temple architecture, Nagarī rekhā or the curvilinear lines of the *Śikhara* and in the same way Nagarilipi or the Northern script." Thus in a limited sense the Nāgarī style area can be defined within the limits of ancient Kāśī, Kośala and Magadha regions. The existing temples of this region also point out that they had some common features.

It is true that there is no temple in Banaras which can be more than three centuries in age except that of Kardameśwara on the *panchakrosī* road. But as we have pointed out the tradition of temple building in Banaras never ceased to exist because it was persistently being practiced by the Hindus inspite of the continued fear of demolition by the Mohammedon rulers. However, it can be assumed that they never built temples in great dimentions. Thus the tradition of the style never died and the existing temples are in continuation of the original style of the soil. Here it must be mentioned that Varanasi being a cosmopolitan city temple styles of almost every part of India can be expected there. But the Nāgara style of temples, in its limited sense, are limited to this part of the country.

On the basis of ground plan several varieties of *Banārasī* temples can be seen today but all these are the elaboration or simplification of the same scheme. These can be classified into five main types according to the elaboration of the ground plan:

1. Simple square *garbhagrha*.
2. A *garbhagrha* with a *maṇḍapa* on one side; sometimes the *maṇḍapa* does not have a *śikhara* but only a varandah with flat roof over it.

[1] *Indian Systems of Writing*. Publications Divisions, 1966, p. 15.

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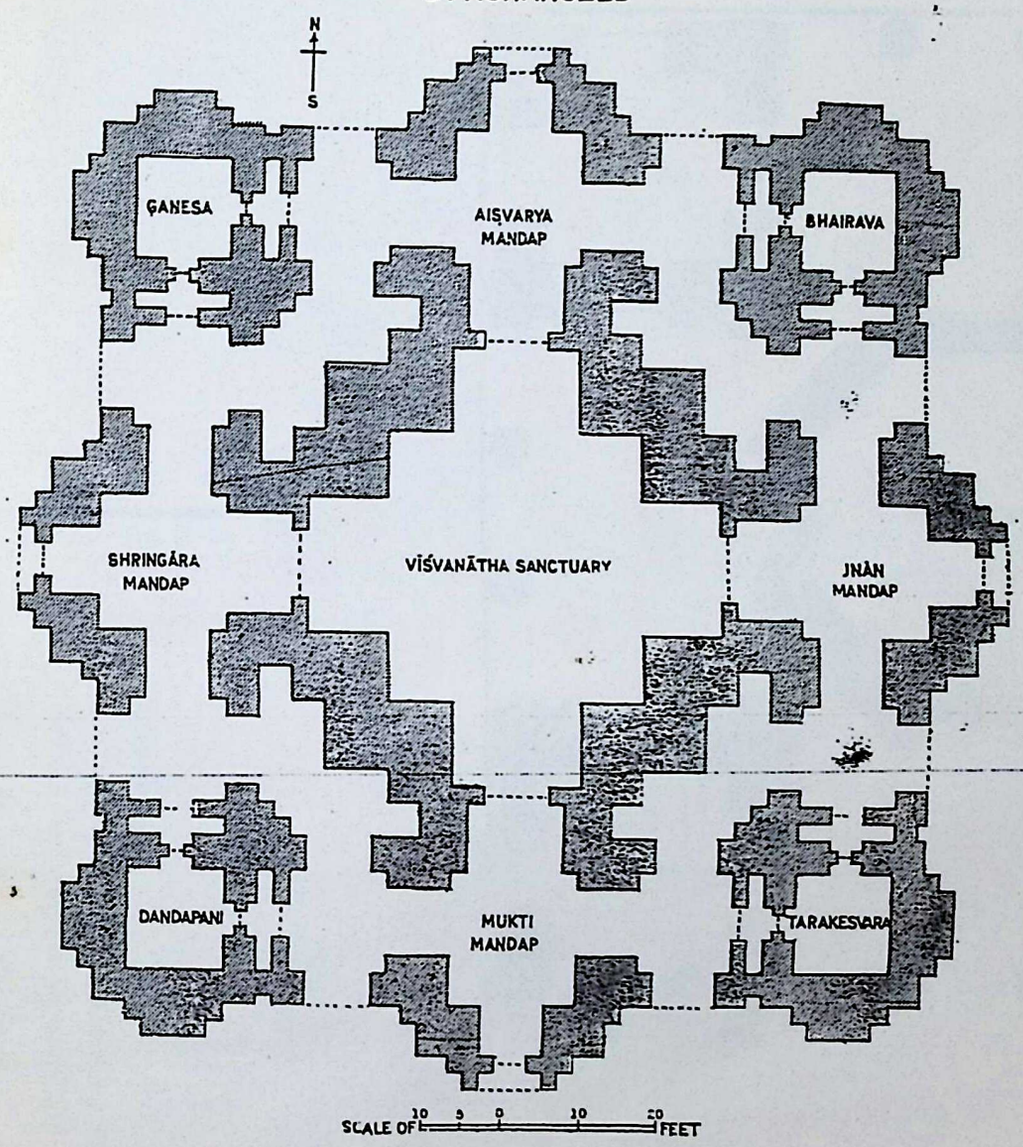
3. A *garbhagṛha* with varandah on all the four sides standing on pillars.
4. A central *garbhagṛha* with subsidiary shrines on all the four corners having smaller *śikharas*. This is *pañcha-ratana* type of temple. Sometimes a temple has only two subsidiary *śikharas* in front portion of the temple. This can be called a *triratana* temple.
5. A *pañcha-ratana* temple with *śikharas* on all the nine compartments formed into a *nava-ratana* temple; the central tower being the highest.

We do not get a *nava-ratana* temple in Banaras today; but the ground plan (**Plate V**) of the demolished Viśwanath temple, now the Aurangzeb masque gives a good example of this. Examples of *pañcha-ratana* temples can be seen at Assi ghat (**Plate VII, a**) and also in Assi Mohalla near Bharati Cinema (**Pate VII, b**). Built about the beginning of this century, by a lady of the former Surasari state, Bihar these temples are similar in plan and elevation. These are square on plan, like the old Viśwanāth temple, with four subsidiery shrines at the four corners. The four *maṇḍapas* on cordinal sides are lorg varandahs with flat roof; while the corner shrines and the central sanctuary have towers five in number the central one being highest. Both these *pañcharatan* temples stand on high plinth. The *pradakṣiṇā-patha* runs around the central sanctuary, which is octagonal or almost circular. (**Plate VI**)

The other types, related to this, can be seen in Śiva temple opposit to Bhāratiya Jnānapītha building on Durgakund Road (**Plate VII, c**). It is a square *garbhagṛha* with flat roofed varandahs on all sides. It has got no subsid ary shrines on the corners with towers. Its central tower is elaborated with five tiers of *aṅgaśikharas* and is complete with all parts of the *Kalaśa* except the trident. The śivalaya by the side of Barahal Kothi is an example of *triratan* temple (**Plate VIII, a**). Standing on a high plateform, the *garbhagṛha* of this temple is *saptarath* on plan with corresponding projections in the walls of three sides. To the north is the door of sanctuary which opens in a long *maṇḍapa* On the both ends of this *maṇḍapa* are situated two subsidiary shrines, square in plan and having separate towers. In front of this *maṇḍapa* there is another flat roofed mandapa. The entire composition having three towers is a simple and magnificient creation of the close of nineteenth century.

[1] Mitra, Rajendra Lala, *Indo Aryans*, Vol. pp. 56 ff.

GROUND PLAN OF THE OLD TEMPLE OF VIŚVANĀTH DEMOLISHED BY AURANGZEB



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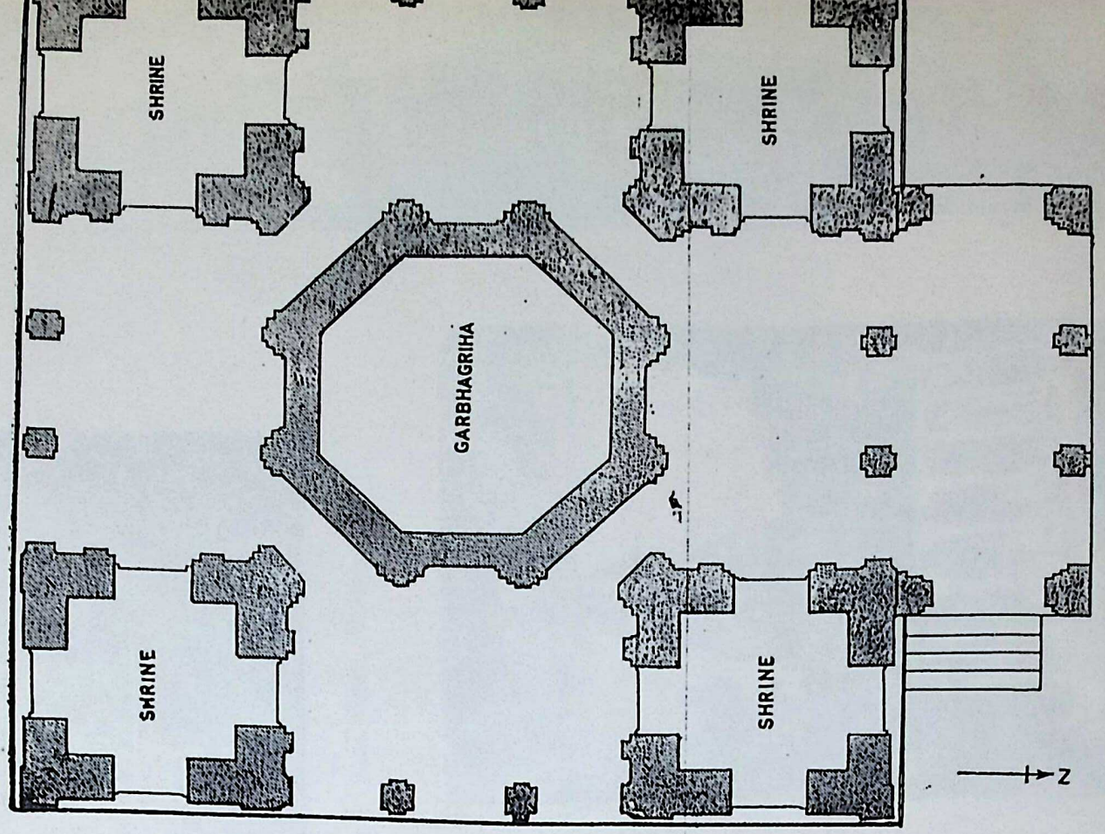
Plat



GROUND PLAN OF PANCHARATAN TEMPLE.ASS
VARANASI

METRES

ÉCONOMIQUES

National • DERF • FNADT Corrèze et Puy-de-Dôme • DNP • Ministère chargé de l'enviro
ment • Conseil régional Limousin

ENSEIGNEMENTS ET FORMATIONS

Formation initiale • CFPPA • ENGREF
Formation continue • MAP • ONF

IMPLICATION DANS DES PROGRAMMES DE RECH

NATIONAUX, EUROPÉENS, INTERNAT

- Projet européen Always : utilisation alternative des terres agricoles avec des a croissance rapide.
- Projet européen de coopération scientifique et technique COST : la forêt dans l loppement rural.
- Projet européen : filière du mélèze.
- GIS ECOFOR : boisement naturel des terres agricoles en déprise.
- GIS AGRIFOR : agroforesterie et forêt paysanne.

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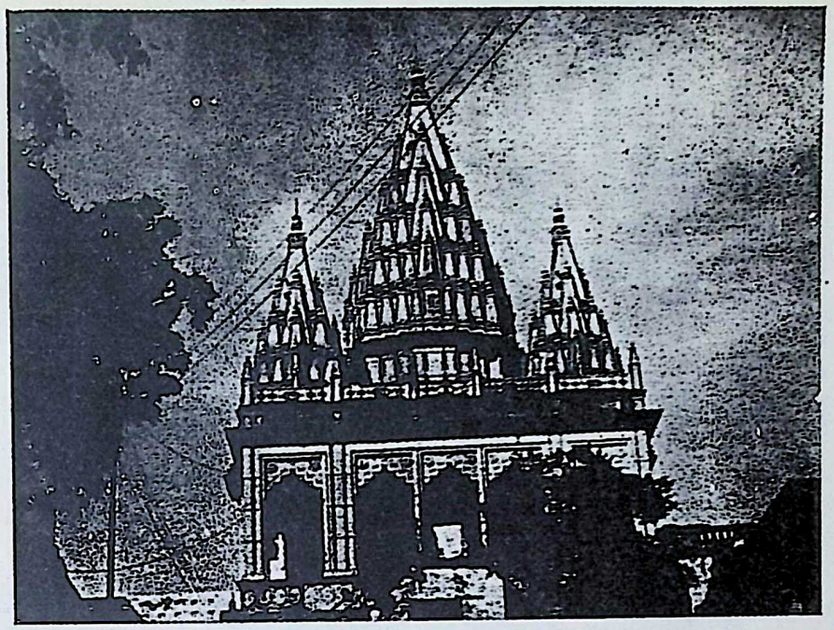
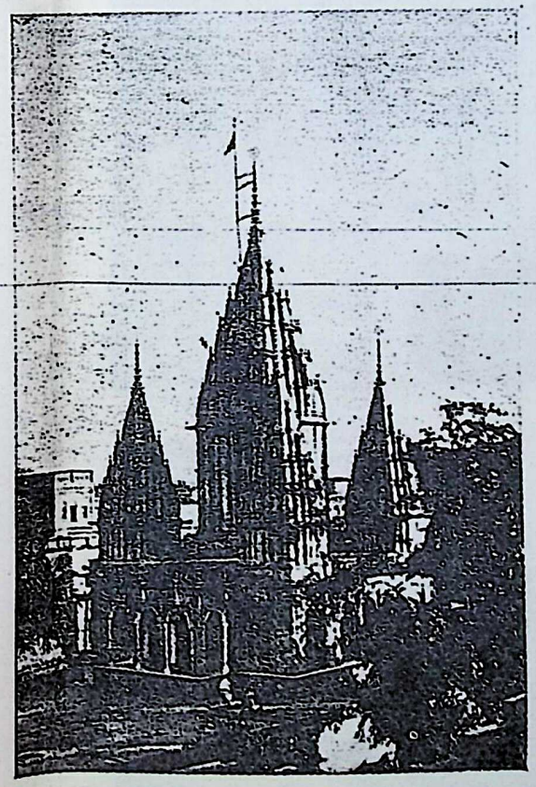
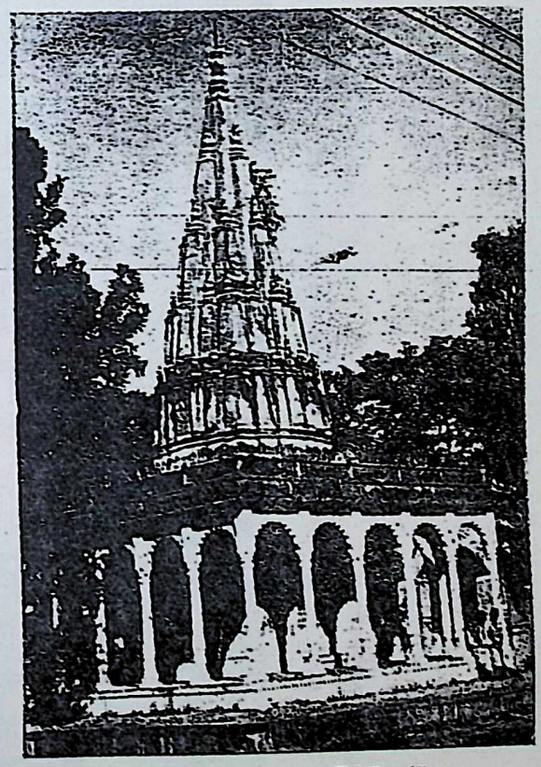


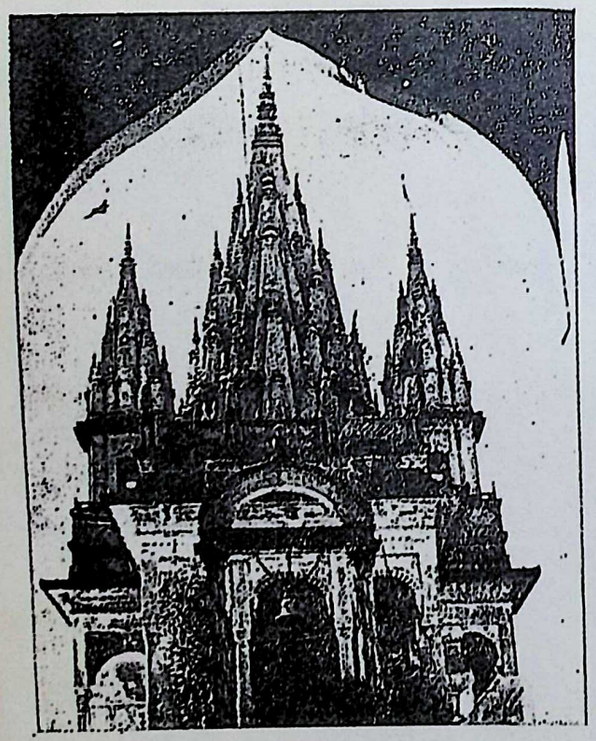
(*a*) Pañcaratan temple, Assi Ghat, Varanasi.



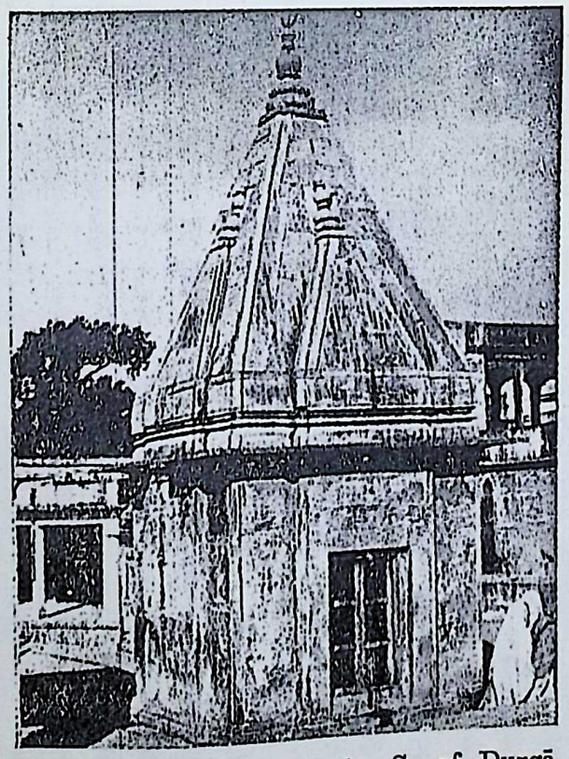
(*b*) Pañcaratan temple, near Bharati Cinema, Assi, Varanasi.



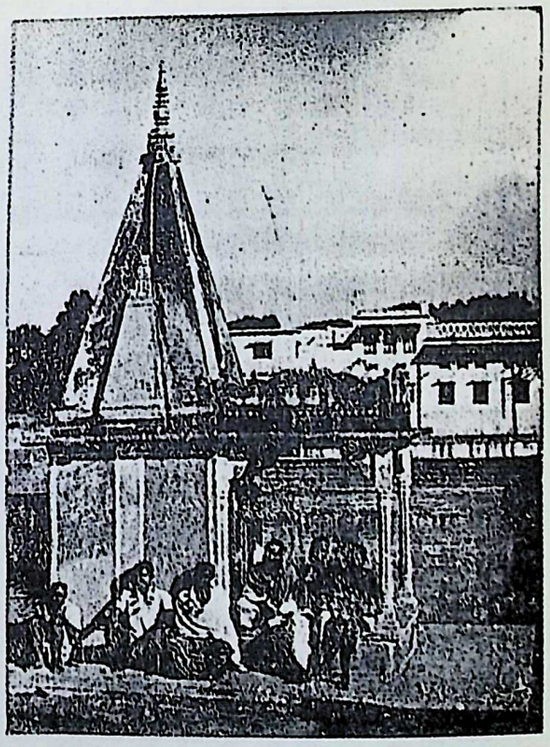
(*c*) Śivālaya, opposite Bhāratīya Jñānapīṭha.



(*a*) Śivālaya, beside Barahal Koṭhī, Durgākuṇḍa, Varanasi.



(*b*) Kulkkuṭeśvara temple, S. of Durgā temple, Varanasi.



(*c*) Śivanātheśvara temple, E. of Durgā temple, Varanasi.

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The simplest of Banaras temples are those with a cubical *garbhagṛha* and a conical tower over it. Babu Rajendralal Mitra describes it as primitive Banaras temple. The Kukkuteśwara temple (**Plate VIII. b**) to the south of the present Durgā temple is of this type. There is an other small temple to the east of the Durgā temple which has a flat roofed varandah in its front. It is called Sivanatheswara temple (**Plate VIII, c**). A śivalaya (**PlateIX, a**) in front of the Barahal Kothi, with a Hanuman image in it, also falls in this group. The Java Vināyaka temple (**Plate IX, b**) on the other side of the Varuna samgam, called *ādiśmasāna*, is another example of this class. Its *śikhara* is typical *Banārasī*. The famous Durgā temple and the present Viśwanath temple also form this group (**Plate IX. c & X a**). The *maṇḍapa* in the latter is domical which is regarded as a muslim influence. But the Durgā temple has a smaller conical śikhara, typical to Banaras. The main śikhara of these temples are decorated with the *anga-śikharas*. There are several other temples of this class in Varanasi. (**Plate X, b & c**)

But the temple standing in front of the office of the *Jnanapitha* (**Plate VII, c**) on Durgakund road has pillared varandas on all the four sides. It is the elaboration of this ground plan which developed into *pancha-ratan* and *nava-ratan* styles, typical to Banaras and a real *Nāgara* style.

The earliest extent temple of this style is the Mahabodhi temple at Bodha-Gaya. It is *pañcha-ratan* in style. It is unfortunate that on account of frequent demolitions no example of the real *Nāgara* style, in its limited sense, can be found but on the basis of the continuity of the tradition and a few examples like those at Bodha-Gaya and Aurangazeb Masque at Varanasi we can infer that there was a distinct style of temple architecture in this part of the country which influenced the other neighbouring styles but maintained its individuality.